

Message Text

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INFO AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMCONSUL ANTWERP

C O N F I D E N T I A L BRUSSELS 0087

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINR, BE, UR

SUBJECT: SOVIET CONSULATE IN ANTWERP

REF 75 BRUSSELS 7628,

SUMMARY. BELGO-SOVIET NEGOTIATIONS FOR SOVIET CONSULATE IN ANTWERP HAVE CONTINUED SPORADICALLY SINCE LAST AUGUST AND HAVE NOW REACHED FINAL STAGES. SOVIETS WILL GET PERMISSION TO OPEN CONSULATE IN ANTWERP AND BELGIANS WILL GAIN ACCESS TO SOVIET LATVIAN PORT OF VENTSPILS. END SUMMARY.

1. ACCORDING TO FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIAL RESPONSIBLE, BELGIAN GOVERNMENT DRAGGED OUT NEGOTIATIONS FOR CONSULATE WHICH STARTED WITH INITIAL SOVIET REQUEST IN OCTOBER 1974. FINALLY IN VIEW OF BELGO-SOVIET CONSULAR CONVENTION, BELGIANS DECIDED THEY COULD NOT REFUSE SOVIET REQUEST INDEFINITELY. AS BELGIANS HAVE NO DIRECT INTEREST IN OPENING A CONSULATE IN USSR, THEY ASKED FOR ACCESS TO SOVIET LATVIAN PORT OF VENTSPILS, WHICH IS PRESENTLY CLOSED TO WESTERN SHIPPING. SOVIETS AGREED TO BELGIAN REQUEST WITHOUT OBJECTION.

2. SOVIETS ORIGINALLY REQUESTED THAT JURISDICTION OF PROPOSED SOVIET CONSULATE IN ANTWERP INCLUDE FOUR NORTH BELGIAN PROVINCES
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(EAST AND WEST FLANDERS, ANTWERP AND LIMBURG). BELGIANS COUNTERED

WITH ANTWERP AND EAST FLANDERS. SOVIETS ARE ESPECIALLY INTERESTED IN HAVING ACCESS TO PORTS OF OSTENDE AND ZEEBRUGGE. BELGIANS WILL IN NEAR FUTURE FINALLY AGREE TO PERMIT SOVIET CONSULAR PERSONNEL FROM ANTWERP TO HAVE ACCESS TO OSTENDE, BUT NOT TO ZEEBRUGGE. (SOVIETS PRESENTLY SEND FREIGHT CARS OCCASIONALLY TO OSTENDE BUT HAVE TOLD BELGIANS THAT WILL INCREASE TO ONE PER DAY IN JUNE 1976.) BELGIANS WILL LIMIT SOVIET CONSULAR PERSONNEL IN ANTWERP TO SIX. DATE FOR OPENING OF SOVIET CONSULATE HAS NOT YET BEEN DECIDED.

3. BELGIANS PLAN TO USE ACCESS TO VENTSPILS FOR LARGE, WELL-KNOWN ANTWERP-BASED BELGIAN SHIPPING FIRM, AHLERS, IN WHICH FOREIGN MINISTRY INFORMS US WEST GERMAN FIRMS HAVE RECENTLY INVESTED. IN ADDITION TO OPENING VENTSPILS, SOVIETS AGREED TO PERMIT THREE MOSCOW-BASED BELGIAN CONSULAR OFFICIALS TO VISIT VENTSPILS REGULARLY IN CONNECTION WITH AHLERS USE OF PORT.

4. IN CONNECTION WITH OPENING OF SOVIET CONSULATE IN ANTWERP, BUT NOT PART OF THAT AGREEMENT, BELGIAN GOVERNMENT PLANS TO TIGHTEN UP ON SOVIET MOVEMENTS WITHIN AND OUT OF BELGIUM. SOVIET AMBASSADOR WILL CONTINUE TO BE PERMITTED TO TRAVEL WITHIN BELGIUM AT WILL. OTHER SOVIET EMBASSY (AND ANTWERP CONSULATE) PERSONNEL WILL BE REQUIRED TO GIVE 24 HOUR NOTICE OF TRAVEL WITHIN BELGIUM AND 48 HOUR NOTICE OF TRAVEL ABROAD. FIRESTONE

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